

The "Our Father"

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The
“Our Father.”

A Booklet
for Young and Old.

From the German

OF
Transl. by
Rev. F. F. Metzger.
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CONTENTS.

Chapter.	Page.
Introduction	5
I. "Our Father"	12
II. "Who art in heaven"	24
III. "Hallowed be Thy name"	36
IV. "Thy Kingdom come"	46
V. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"	58
VI. "Give us this day our daily bread" .	69
VII. "Forgive us our trespasses as we for- give those who trespass against us"	82
VIII. "Lead us not into temptation" . .	95
IX. "Deliver us from evil"	105

INTRODUCTION.

A PARTY of travellers in Morocco one day came across a number of Arabs. The latter having called the former "infidels," one of the travellers said to them: "Who has told you that we are infidels? Listen to our daily prayer, and judge for yourselves." He then slowly and distinctly recited the "Our Father." The Mahomedans, full of astonishment, held their peace. At last one of them exclaimed: "May God curse me, if I ever again insult those who hold so grand a faith! May that prayer be mine until my last hour comes. Be so kind, O Nazarene, to repeat that prayer, so that it may be deeply impressed on our memory, and written down by us in letters of gold." Whence comes the wonderful power of the "Our Father?"

"And it came to pass, that as Jesus was in a certain place praying, when He ceased,

one of His disciples said to Him: Lord, teach us how to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said to them: When you pray, say: Our Father, etc.' (Luke II. 1, 2.)

Already on a previous occasion our divine Saviour had taught His disciples the "Our Father." It was in the beginning of His ministry. The fame of His wonderful doctrine and of His many miracles had induced an immense multitude from every part of Palestine to gather around Him. "Seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain." (Mat. 4. 1.) There He addressed those who had followed Him the beautiful and sublime discourse, known as the Sermon on the Mount. Although it fills only three chapters of the Gospel of St. Matthew, it contains far more wisdom and truth than all the works of the greatest philosophers. In the course of the sermon He spoke of the qualities of prayer, and then continued: "Thus shall you pray. Our Father," etc. (Mat. 6. 9.)

The "Our Father," then, has for its author, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the

only-begotten Son of God. Could any other prayer have a more sublime origin? This is not possible, for who is greater and more exalted than God, "who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and shutteth up the stars as it were under a seal; who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and walketh upon the waves of the sea. . . . Who bindeth up the waters in His clouds, so that they break not out and fall down together." (Job ch. 9 and 26.)

We have prayers which have flowed from the lips of St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus, and other great saints. We prefer these prayers to our own, because we can hardly pray better than in the language of the saints. We have prayers composed by our holy Mother the Church. These prayers are said during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in the administration of the Sacraments. And in saying them we know that we can more easily secure a favorable hearing than if we recited prayers of a mere human origin. But the "Our Father" is the prayer of our Lord Himself; its author is the Most High; it was composed,

not by a saint nor by the Church, but by God Himself. How, then, can there be a prayer more beautiful, more sacred, or more effective! And the Almighty has condescended to teach it to man, that conceited but frail creature,

Whose knowledge seems deep as the sky
on the lake,
Till the mire at six inches deep reveals
the mistake.

The supreme Sanctity, which could challenge its bitterest foes to convict it of sin, deigns to instruct sinful man how he has to address his Maker. He, whose aid we must implore and on whose mercy depends the hearing of our prayer, descended from the heights of His heavenly abode, became man, like ourselves, and puts, as it were, the words on our lips, which we are to address to Him in order to be heard with certainty. Since our divine Redeemer promised that His heavenly Father would hear our prayers — “Whatsoever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you,” — “how much more effective,” says St. John Chrysostom, “will our prayer

be, if it is couched in our Lord's own words!" The "Our Father" is, therefore, beyond all doubt, the most beautiful, the most sacred, the most efficacious and the best of prayers.

Whenever we wish to obtain favor from a high official or a great personage, we find it difficult to clothe our petition in appropriate words, for our success will, to a great extent, depend on the manner in which we address our request. Are we not, then, grateful if a good friend kindly assists us in drawing up our petition? Most certainly. But should we not be much more anxious and feel much more embarrassed when there is question of addressing the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, and of craving His favors? How dare we, poor and wretched sinners, approach Him, speak to Him, or seek His benefits? How can we find words appropriate and worthy of being heard? And how great must not our gratitude be to our Lord, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who humbles Himself so far as to teach us how we should speak to Him, who places,

so to speak, in our hands the very petition which we are to lay before Him! That petition is the "Our Father." How can there be longer any doubt about its being the best, the most appropriate and the most beautiful of prayers! How rich and full of meaning are its contents, and how easy and simple its form and wording! Any child can commit it to memory and learn its meaning; both the learned and the illiterate find therein all that they seek. It is truly a supersubstantial food, capable of satisfying even the strongest minds. The poet von Dyherrn thus sings of that beautiful prayer. —

O "Our Father!" Thou the noblest prayer;
The sum and flower of all that man can pray;
Of all mysterious yearnings of his soul,
Of all his heart's deep faith and hope and love!
Thou bridge of gold that leads to heaven's door!
Thou pillar round which hope eternal climbs!
Thou beam of light from out the blackest night!
Wondrous the fruit that prayer hath borne for man,
Whose deed was down within the Heart of Christ.

Only those will grasp the wonderful contents of the "Our Father," who say it with attention and fervor, with a heart full of

faith and confidence. But how often is it said thus? The little peasant who lost his wager with St. Bernard, is not the only one who recited the "Our Father" without attention. He bet that he could recite one "Our Father" without distraction; the saint promised him a horse, if he succeeded in doing so. The peasant began the "Our Father" very devoutly, but he had not yet got half through, when he stopped suddenly, and asked St. Bernard: "Will you give me the saddle also?"—When we pray, we speak to God, and should, therefore, think of God and not allow worldly things to turn our attention away from Him.

He prayeth best who deepest sinketh
Into Him before whom he kneeleth.

(Angelus Silesius.)



CHAPTER I.

“Our Father.”

IT is our divine Saviour Himself who teaches us to address the Almighty by the sweet name of “Father.” Is not this the greatest honor for us to call God “our Father” and to consider ourselves as His children? God is the Creator and the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. He is infinite, eternal and omnipotent. To Him belongs the sun with his ocean of flame. His is the moon with her gentle light; His the firmament with its millions and millions of stars; His the earth with its mountains and valleys, its rivers and seas, its fields and meadows. All things are His; He carries, as it were, all things in His hands; He is the absolute Master of the universe. And this great God, this Lord of lords, permits, nay commands, us, humble creatures, to call Him “Father!”

Who is He, whom we call “Father?” He is most holy and most pure; more pure than the brilliancy of light, more holy than all angels and saints. Human language can find no words, the human mind can form no idea adequate to express God’s holiness. And the Holy of holies, the purest of beings, permits, and even commands us, sinful men, to call Him “Father!”

Who is He, whom we call “Father?” He is the God of justice, who will come again at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. And this awe-inspiring Judge, who “without acceptance of persons, judges every one according to his works,” permits, nay commands, us, poor children of men, to call Him “Father!” O how infinitely good is God, our Lord!

But when we call God “Father,” we do not make use of a figure of speech, but we speak truly, for God is, in deed, our Father, first, because He created us after His own image; secondly, because He cares for us with a father’s love; and thirdly, because He made us His children by holy baptism.

God created us. "He made us, and not we ourselves." (Ps. 99. 3.) He made us after His own image and likeness; He endowed our soul with reason and free-will. He has given us all that we are and all that we have. He is, then, our Lord and Master, and we are dependent upon Him as children upon their father.

Furthermore, God cares for us with a father's love. The most sensitive part of our body is our eye. God compares His paternal love for us to the care a man has for the apple of his eye. "He protects us as the apple of His eye." He who injures man, injures the apple of God's eye. It is said that the eagle cares better for its young than other animals. It entices them to fly, protects them, watches over them and assists them when exhausted. It is precisely with the eagle's care for its young that God compares His fatherly love for us; "He spreads out the wings" of His divine Providence over men, and carries them on the shoulders of His omnipotence and goodness. The maternal love surpasses every other human love. The mother

shrinks from no labor, no fatigue, no sacrifice for the welfare of her child. It is, however, precisely with the maternal love that God compares His paternal love for us. “Can a woman,” He asks, “forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee; behold, I have graven thee in My hands.” (Is. 49. 15. 16.)

“My name lay written in His hand,
Oh! long before I knew Him;
And in His arms I’m borne along,
My God, my only King.”

God made us His children by holy baptism. By this sacrament we were freed from original sin, and sanctifying grace was infused into our soul, and we thus became children of God. “Behold,” says St. John, “what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God.” (I John 3. 1.) One day when Father Mac Carthy, a celebrated orator, was preaching on the effects of holy baptism, he suddenly stopped short, and, gazing at his hearers with an expression of the deepest surprise,

he continued his sermon as if he were awakening from a dream: "O God where am I, what do I see? My corporal eyes tell me: 'Here are servants, workmen, farmers, merchants, government officials; some poor, some rich, some in low station, others more exalted. But my spiritual eye, penetrating these mortal frames, beholds their souls all radiating with the splendor of sanctifying grace. Therefore,'" continued he bowing low before his hearers, "receive, O ye highborn children of God, in the name of the heavenly Father, my respectful greeting."

And deservedly so, for we are, indeed, the children of God, and God is our Father. Let us, therefore, so live as becomes children of God. "Be ye perfect," says our blessed Redeemer, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mat. 5. 48.) But do we sincerely aim after Christian perfection? Do we pray often and fervently, hear the word of God regularly, and frequently and worthily receive the sacraments? Do we perform our daily actions in the state of grace and with a good intention? Do we

strive to deny ourselves and to shun whatever may grieve the paternal heart of God?

Boleslaus, King of Poland, used to wear constantly over his breast the portrait of his father. Whenever he would undertake anything, he would first look at it and say: “Be it far from me, that I should do anything unworthy of thee, my father!” We, too, wear the image of God, our heavenly Father, in our soul. Let us look at it earnestly before every undertaking, saying like Boleslaus: “Be it far from me, that I should do anything unworthy of Thee, my Father!”

We are children of God; it behooves us, then, to be zealous for the honor of our Father? But are we always so? Or are we not too cowardly to speak out when the name of God is dishonored and insulted in our presence? Are we not too timid to defend the Church and her authorities, the Pope, the bishops and the clergy, when they are reviled, or slandered, when their rights are trampled upon? “The Pope is my father; his annointed head is in danger; when did a dutiful son ever forsake his father in need?” Thus spoke in 1860

the noble General Lamoricière, when some of his would-be friends sought to dissuade him from drawing his sword in defence of the Apostolic See.

We are children of God; we should, therefore, go to Him with the fullest confidence. "He that wavereth," says St. James, "is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." (James 1. 6, 7.) But why should we set any bounds to our confidence, is not He, to whom we pray, our Father?

Let all the starry vault grow dark,
My heart will not despair;
A simple glance towards God in heaven
Will calm my soul in prayer.

Assistance sure I know will come
From God in whom I trust;
For oft before I've felt secure
In Him who is so just.

God is my Father ever kind,
In whom I place all care;
And like a child my sorrows pour
In his bosom in my prayer.

Let us, then, embark for the voyage over the sea of this life on the bark of divine Providence, without troubling ourselves too much about wind and weather. Let us entrust ourselves to the Lord's care without fear or reserve, for “His mercy is above all His works.” Do we not call Him “our Father” at the very beginning of the prayer which He Himself has taught us? How, then, could such a father forsake His own children?

We address God not merely as “Father,” but as “our Father,” and why? There is not a superfluous word in the Lord's Prayer; every word in it has its own special meaning, hence also the word “our.” By requiring us to use this word, our divine Saviour would have us consider and love one another as brothers; hence He bids us say, *not my* Father, but “our Father.” God is the Father of all men; and all men are, then, brethren to one another, and as brethren, are bound to love one another sincerely, and not simply to *tolerate* one another.

Some people speak often and much of

toleration. They mean nothing else than that we should show forbearance towards one another, for toleration is forbearance. There is, however, a two-fold toleration, the one in regard to doctrines, and the other in regard to persons. The former kind is a serious offence against God, and the other may be an offence against our fellow-men. But how can this be? He who says that we should be tolerant in matters of faith and doctrine, means thereby that it matters not what a person believes; that it is indifferent if, like the Christians, a person believes in one only God in three divine Persons, or, like the pagans, adores the sun, moon, stars and idols; that it is indifferent whether we believe that the Redeemer has already come and saved mankind by His death on the cross, or that He is still to come, as the Jews say; that it is the same whether we believe in the Real Presence, or denounce the holy sacrifice of the Mass as blasphemous idolatry, according to the thirty-nine articles of Anglicanism; that it makes no difference whether we maintain with St.

James that faith without works is dead, or assume with Martin Luther that faith in Christ's merits, without any good works of our own, will save us, and that infidelity is the only grievous sin. Such utterances are blasphemous, because they are derogatory to God, the infallible Truth, and are, therefore, most grievous sins.

Toleration is also an offence against our neighbor, for a person “tolerates” or puts up with only that which he cannot change, but which he would alter or get rid of if he could. Father Roh, the celebrated Jesuit preacher, used to illustrate this very comically by referring to a traveller whose clothing is full of unwelcome and annoying guests. These he “tolerates” during his journey, because he cannot help it, since he lacks the opportunity of ridding himself of them; but as soon as he is able to shake off his tormentors, his toleration of them ceases altogether.

It is evidently uncharitable to treat our fellow-men as if they were only troublesome vermin, of which we long to rid ourselves, for every man, whatever be his religion or

his nationality, has the right to be treated by his fellow-men, not with toleration, but with *love*, for our divine Saviour expressly commands: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We are all brethren, and must therefore, love one another. The Christian religion commands us, not to tolerate, but to love one another, for it is a religion of love.

As brethren it behooves us also to honor and respect one another and to pray for one another, for have we not all *one* Father? "Hath not *one* God created us? Why then doth every one of us despise his brother?" (Mal. 2. 10.) "Our Father," pray both the learned and the illiterate, the rich as well as the poor, the young and the old, the Eskimo and the European, the negro as well as the white man, for God is *our* Father, and we are all brethren. It is, therefore, our duty to respect one another, to pray for one another.

One day Louis Veuillot, the celebrated French journalist, had an audience with Pope Gregory XVI. "I stood," he relates, "before the Pope; I forgot the aged and learned man, the prince and the Vicar of

Christ, and seeing in him only the father of Christendom, I addressed him in a voice trembling with emotion: *Santo Padre!* (Holy Father!) And the Pope, bowing to give me his blessing, called me *Figliuolo!* (My little son!)” “Father” is the name we give to the head of the Church; and we are allowed to call God Himself also “Father,” whose representative on earth is the Pope. What a consolation, what an honor, what a happiness! Let us be children of God in deed, children worthy of such a Father, so that we may never deserve to hear from Him the terrible words addressed by a father to his undutiful and deeply fallen daughter: “Depart from me, for thou art no longer my child!” This was too much for the unfortunate girl, for a few steps from her father’s house, she dropped down dead from a broken heart. Let us be true children of God, and we may then say to Him with full confidence: “Our Father!”



CHAPTER II.

“Who art in heaven.”

GOD is everywhere present, in heaven and on earth. “Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend to hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” (Ps. 138. 7-10.) Thus sang the Royal Psalmist. How then can we pray: “Who art in heaven?”

Although God is everywhere present, yet He dwells in heaven in a particular manner. There He reveals His glory to the angels and saints; there Jesus Christ stands as our Mediator and Intercessor with the Father. We should always appear before God with deep reverence. He is our Father, it is true; but we must not forget that He is God, the God of infinite

perfection. He is Goodness and Love itself; but, at the same time, He is Omnipotence, infinite Justice and Holiness itself. He is the Happiness of all the saints, but, at the same time, He is the terror of all the wicked. It behooves us, then, always to appear before Him with holy reverence. It is not becoming for us to be standing or seated whenever we lay before Him our petitions. As the Catholic respectfully bends his knees before the Vicar of Christ; as the choirs of angels prostrate themselves in adoration before the throne of the divine Majesty, so we also should speak to God, our Lord, on our knees, for He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, infinitely exalted above all creatures.

Eleonora, empress of Austria, was wont to kneel down humbly when saying her prayers. A foreign ambassador, surprised thereat, one day said to her: “Would not your majesty prefer to sit down?” “What!” replied the empress, “none of my courtiers ventures to sit down in my presence, although I am only a poor sinner, and how should I dare to sit down before my Lord and my God!”

It is also unbecoming for us to think of worldly affairs whilst we are speaking to God. What would happen to a man, who, when presenting a petition to the President, would take no notice of the President, but would gaze all around him? Would not the President be justified in putting him out for his want of respect? But are we not often wilfully distracted during prayer? Do we not allow our eyes and our thoughts to wander about in all directions? How can such a prayer be heard? Is not rather that saying of our Lord fulfilled in us: "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me?"

Our prayer should not only be reverential, but also full of confidence, for Jesus Christ is our Mediator and Intercessor with the Father in heaven. But how can the heavenly Father refuse to grant the petition of His only-begotten Son! Has not our Lord Himself assured us; "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, it shall be given to you?" Much more certainly will our prayer be heard, if our divine Saviour Himself prays for us.

Let us, then, raise our thoughts far above earthly things, above creatures, above the universe, up to heaven itself. There reigns our heavenly Father in all the Majesty of His being, and before Him stands His only-begotten Son, interceding for His children on earth, whom He redeemed nearly nineteen centuries ago by His bitter death on Mount Calvary. Jesus Christ points to His five wounds, which, like five golden suns, radiate from His sacred body; and the heavenly Father, seeing them, cannot refuse to grant Him what He asks for us. How then, having such an Intercessor and Mediator, can our prayers be so full of diffidence? The words “who art in heaven” should fill us with the greatest reverence and the utmost confidence, and, at the same time, they should guide us to heaven, our true country.

Think of what's beyond the sky;

Strive for God and heaven.

Happy will he ever be

Who spurns all earthly leaven.

(Jacopone da Todi.)

Since our Father is in heaven, constituting there the happiness of all the angels

and saints, it follows that this earth is a place of pilgrimage, an exile, and that we are here below merely strangers and pilgrims, and that our true home is above. "For," says St. Paul, "we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Hebr. 13. 14.) Heaven is our final end, our destination, our country. There is our Promised Land, there we shall be forever happy in the contemplation and possession of God.

Who then should ever lose sight of this his final destiny? Who then should not be willing to do all, to endure all to reach this his true home? And yet how many are there not who live altogether forgetful of heaven, who are wholly absorbed in worldly aims and pursuits, whose only thought is money, riches and property, and who are dead, as it were, to everything supersensible! How many dream only of honors, of fame, of influence, of glory! How many are wallowing in the mire of sensual pleasures, their eyes dimmed and their heart fettered by ties of impure love! Is not all this terribly sickening? In vain

do all the bells in the church-tower ring for them, although these bells inspire every generous soul with a longing for the heavenly home. In vain does the priest during the holy Sacrifice exhort them to lift up their hearts from this world to their home above. In vain do millions of twinkling stars shine on the vast expanse of the firmament, summoning them to raise their eyes to the source of all light. In vain do the daily papers announce to them on almost every page fatal accidents and sudden deaths, to remind them of eternity. In vain does God through the voice of their conscience speak inwardly to them; in vain do the charitable admonitions and entreaties of well-meaning friends and companions resound in their ears. It is all in vain, they are deaf to all this, they are, as it were, dead for heaven, and heaven seems not to exist for them.

And yet it was the thought of heaven that saved a young man not long ago. A well-to-do farmer had an only son, whom he educated in the practice of his religion. This young man had often to go to a neigh-

boring town on business. There, Charles Wendig, for this was his name, used to meet, among others, so-called liberal-minded men, who sneered at God and religion. At first, Charles used to defend religion, but after a while, growing tired of disputing with them, he kept silence, and later on joined in their sneers. One day his father said to him: "My son, I have already warned you several times against the company you keep. Why do you still frequent it? Why do you go to a house where only unbelievers assemble? You must at once quit these people, or else you will before long lose that precious faith which your late mother and myself have implanted in your heart. Do you not still remember the last words which she spoke to you on her death-bed: 'Charles,' she said, 'always have God before your eyes; be ever watchful and never consent to what is sinful. Shun frivolous companions, who indulge in obscene and irreligious conversation, for he who associates with them will soon suffer shipwreck in his faith. Often look up to heaven, and so live that you may not lose

your place there.’ Thus spoke your mother to you. These were her last words. Act up to them, and reform your evil ways.’ The young man, however, heeded not this advice. The very next week he again sought his boon companions in town, and sank deeper and deeper in sin, and soon surpassed them all in obscenity and impiety. He left his father’s house and went so far as to contract a civil marriage with a woman of ill repute, who had left her husband. His father died broken-hearted at his son’s misconduct. After a few week’s illness he departed this life without having seen his depraved son. Charles now began to lead a still more scandalous life, for, being an only child, he inherited the whole of his father’s fortune, which was considerable. But in less than two years he had squandered all, and his health was gone, for, owing to his dissolute life, he had contracted an incurable disease, and had to be taken to a charity hospital. There he lay in the ward assigned to incurable and contagious diseases, and no one was allowed to visit him. Only

the nurse, who was a Sister of Charity, the physician and the chaplain of the hospital would come in to see him and attend to him. The priest endeavored to induce him to be reconciled to God, saying it was not yet too late for him to do so; but the sick man would reply with curses and imprecations. "Is your father still alive," asked the priest one day? "No." "And your mother?" This question so moved the invalid, that a large tear rolled down his cheek. "Your mother also is dead; is she not? What did she say to you before she died?" The sick man began to sob aloud, and said between his sobs: "Often look up to heaven, and so live that you may not lose your place there. These were her last words. But I have lost my place there long ago." "Oh, no!" said the priest; "make a good confession, and God will forgive you all." The same morning Charles, who was very low, made his confession with many tears, received holy Communion and extreme unction, and by evening he was no longer among the living.

Often look up to heaven, and so live that

you may not lose your place there! Let us not be discouraged, if in this world sufferings and trials of all kinds come upon us, as once happened to holy Job. The trials and crosses of this life last but a short time, and then heaven will be ours, if we have borne them well. We may be despised here below, and no one may care for us; but let us be comforted, for in heaven the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. We may be ill and suffering and bed-ridden for years; but let us be comforted, for in heaven our sores will shine like precious gems. We may be poor and destitute, and may hardly be able to procure the necessaries of life for ourselves and our families; but let us be comforted, for in heaven we shall have every thing in abundance. Let us look up to heaven! “Seek the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.” (Coloss. 3. 1, 2.) The more we suffer on earth, and the more patiently we bear our trials for the love of God, the more glorious will be our reward in heaven.

On the grave of the French soldiers who

fell at the battle on the Spicherer heights in 1870, there is a large plain cross, which bears this inscription: "Melio^{rem} patriam appetierunt;" that is: "They sought a better country." May these words be one day placed on our tombstone also! Of course, we love our native land; we love the spot where our cradle was rocked, where we passed the happy days of our childhood. But still more should we love our heavenly country, that land where the sun never sets, where no tears ever flow, where God Himself will be our "reward exceedingly great." Let us steadily strive to reach this "better land;" no labor can be too heavy, no sacrifice too great to secure our last end, and then our present trials which are momentary and light, will procure us a glory that is abundant, eternal and surpassing all understanding.

I hear thee speak of the Better Land;
Thou callest its children a happy band;
Mother, oh, where is that radiant shore?
Shall we not seek it, and weep no more?
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,
And the fire-flies glance through the myrtle-
boughs?

Not there, not there, my child.

Is it far away, in some region old,
Where the rivers wander o'er sands of gold?
Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand?
Is it there, sweet mother, that Better Land?
Not there, not there, my child.

Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy!
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair;
Sorrow and death may not enter there.
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
It is there, it is there, my child.
(Hemans.)

And would'st thou know the happy way
That leads to this land of endless day?
There is but one, which the King will show
To all who sigh and pray to go.
T'is called the Royal Road of the Cross
T'is hard, but sure, where none are lost—
Where the yoke and burdens light, my child.



CHAPTER III.

“Hallowed be Thy name.”

A LITTLE four year old girl had a bad and passionate father, who was rather too fond of drink. The father would often send her to buy snuff for him. But, as is usual with little children to be forgetful and love to play, she would sometimes stop on her way to watch other children playing in the street. This would so irritate her father, that he would begin to curse and beat her. This treatment would so frighten her, as to cause her to tremble all over and make her even afraid to cry. Once she fell ill, and her mother, who also had a great deal to put up with, sitting down at her bed-side, said to her: “Do you know what you should do, my little Teresa? You should die, and, when you are in heaven, you will pray that I may also soon join you there.” “Yes,” replied the sick child; “when I am in heaven, I will pray that you may soon come there, and that

Charlie and Mary Ann also may come.”

“Will you also pray,” continued the mother, “for your father, that he, too, may come to us in heaven?” Then the little girl, after a few moments of reflection, said in a sly manner: “No, because I should have to go and get snuff for him, and he might whip me again.”

Some persons imagine, like little Teresa, that things go on in heaven just as on earth. This is a great mistake, for he who faithfully serves God in this vale of tears, will be perfectly happy in heaven. Therefore in the “Our Father” we say “hallowed be Thy name.” By this we pray that God may be known, loved and glorified by us all.

At first the child knows nothing about God. Later on it hears His name mentioned without reflecting on it. But as it grows older, the oftener it gazes at the heavens and the earth, the more it learns what reason and revelation tell us about God, the clearer will be its notions of the Supreme Being, and the clearer its notions of Him become, the purer and deeper also will be its love for God. But true love of God

prompts us to praise and honor Him in all things. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory."

But it is not enough to honor the name of God by our words, we must do so also by our deeds. The holy name of God is shamefully dishonored, not only by those who irreverently pronounce it, who blaspheme it, who utter frivolous, unnecessary or false oaths, but also by those who live all the year round in sin, who neglect their prayers, who do not hear Mass on Sundays, who break the laws of abstinence and fasting, who, in a word, grievously transgress any of the commandments of God or of His Church. It is to all these that God addresses this rebuke by the mouth of His prophet: "If I then be a father, where is My honor?" (Mal. 1. 6.) Does not God punish these transgressors sometimes even in this life?

One Saturday evening in the Advent of 1850 a party of guests were sitting up and chatting in an inn in Switzerland with the innkeeper and his wife. The conversation soon fell upon the existence of God. The

inn-keeper, an arrogant, conceited and irreligious young man, rose up calling out to the company: “Let every one here who does not believe in God, hold up his hand.” At the same time, with a scornful laugh, he held up three fingers of his right hand, and with his left he compelled his wife to stand up and hold up her hand. Three of the guests likewise raised their hands. The others remained seated in silence; a strange feeling at once took possession of them all, and not another word was spoken and very soon every one left the room in silence to retire for the night.

The inn-keeper and his wife slept in a room that was heated with charcoal. The next morning they did not rise. The inmates went to church and came back from church, and yet nothing was seen of the inn-keeper and his wife. The door of their bed-room was forced open, and they were found in bed both apparently dead. The physician who was summoned, declared that they had been asphyxiated by the fumes of the charcoal. He did all in his power to revive them. The wife was dead,

but the husband, still alive, was unconscious, and although he did not die till eight days later, he never recovered consciousness, but up to his last moment he kept three fingers of his right hand between his clenched teeth; and thus he died. Two of the others who had shared in his blasphemy, fell ill soon after, and died without receiving the last sacraments. The remaining one from that day became a changed man, and led a life of penance and prayer, to the edification of the whole parish.

In saying "hallowed be Thy name," we express the wish that the holy name of God be glorified in word and deed, not only by ourselves, but also by all men, and first of all, by those who do not know God. These are the heathens. In what a sad state are they not! They behold, indeed, the glorious sun, but Him who has placed the sun in the heavens, they do not know. They sow their seeds and reap the harvest, but Him who imparts vitality to the seed and fertility to the soil, they know not. They refresh their bodies with food and drink, but Him from whom every good gift flows,

who is the “Father of light,” they know not. And because they know not God, they adore Him not, nor do they love and serve Him; nay, they even boldly commit sins and crimes of all kinds. How different would it be, if the light of the true faith would enlighten their minds, if they would acknowledge the true God and His Son Jesus Christ, whom He sent to save the world! The heavenly Father would find among them numberless worshippers, and would be glorified by their holy lives. Can we not do something towards securing so desirable an object? Most certainly we can. Missionaries courageously go forth into barbarous countries, preach there the Gospel amid labors and privations, and even at the risk of their lives, in order that the name of God may be glorified among the heathen. If we cannot go there ourselves, we have it in our power to help these missionaries by our prayers and our alms. St. Ignatius used to weep whenever he looked at a map of the world, because so many hundred millions of its inhabitants are seated in the darkness of error and un-

belief. Let us pray for these unfortunate fellow-men, and, at the same time, place our offerings at the feet of the apostles of the faith. Thus we shall contribute our share towards securing the fulfilment of the petition—"hallowed be Thy name," so far as the heathen are concerned.

In saying "hallowed be Thy name," we should also be mindful of those who, indeed, know God, but who do not love or glorify Him. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who know God, but who do not really love Him, nor think of Him, nor thank Him, just as if he were not their Father, and as if He had not lavished His favors on them. Far from glorifying God by their virtues, they offend and dishonor Him by their sins and vices. Such persons are Christians in name, but heathens in deed. Can we not do something for them also? Yes; we can pray for them, and by our good example bring about their conversion.

Lastly, let us think also of those who dishonor the holy name of God by cursing, who stain their lips with oaths and blas-

phemies. The number of these sinners being on the increase, we need not be astonished if God multiplies His punishments on mankind. St. Louis, king of France, enacted a law that the lips of him who had uttered a blasphemy, should be branded with a red-hot iron. Not long after an officer was to have the punishment inflicted on him for the sin of blasphemy. His friends endeavored to obtain his pardon from the holy king, but in vain, for he said: “I willingly forgive offences committed against my own self; but when the Majesty of God is publicly insulted, I will never forgive the offender. I would submit my own tongue to be perforated by a red-hot iron, if, by so doing, I could banish blasphemy from my kingdom.” Although now-a-days we no longer have such laws and such kings, God will, nevertheless, not let go unpunished the insults offered to His holy name. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord shall not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.” (Exod. 20. 7.)

Alongside the high-road of Ortenberg, near Offenburg, there is from time immemorial a crucifix of stone which now bears the inscription: "Mutilée par un impie. Un général Français l' a fait rétablir. L' an 1807." "Mutilated by an impious man. A French general had it restored. The year 1807." In the spring of 1799 Offenburg was taken by the French. It was on the evening of June 23rd. After their victory the French dragoons spent their time in fighting, wrestling and dancing. One of them took no part in these exercises, but rambled about the country along the high-road. When he came up to the stone crucifix, he uttered the most dreadful oaths and broke off both feet from the image of the crucifix. But the divine punishment followed very swiftly. Three days later during battle a cannon ball cut off both feet of the same soldier, who was then close to the spot where the crucifix stood. "This is a most just punishment for my crime," exclaimed the now repentant soldier. "It is a judgment of God," his companions cried out. Some years later a

French general, in reparation of the crime, had the crucifix restored with the inscription given above.

“All things to the greater glory of God,” is the motto of the Society of Jesus. Let it be our motto also. As often as we repeat the words “hallowed be Thy name,” let us from our inmost heart address this wish to heaven: “May the holy name of God be known, loved, praised and glorified more and more by us and by all men!”



CHAPTER IV.

“Thy kingdom come.”

THERE is scarcely anything that evokes in us more melancholy recollections than the ruins of an old castle. The mansion, formerly so magnificent, is now but a mass of broken stones, over which the ivy is creeping, and on which the lizard is basking in the rays of the sun. Brushwood grows on the top of the tower, and a fir-tree replaces the floating standard. The castle moat is filled up with rubbish, and the blackberry bushes force their way between the stones that have fallen down. This spot was perhaps formerly the garden of the castle, where amid the flowers and shrubs young damsels of noble birth merrily walked, and where the children used to play. But, alas! all now looks so desolate and silent. Only the cry of the hawk, which now and then circles overhead, sometimes greets the ear, whilst a gentle breeze rustles through the half

decayed doorways, the lofty windows and the ancient pines, as if it were the sighs of the last barons, long ago departed,—sighs, that the storm of time has swept away all the splendors of the past.

Thus, indeed, pass away the glory of the world! One glory, however, never passes away,—the glory of heaven! Hence we say in the “Our Father,” “Thy kingdom come!”

In order to render the day of the baptism of Clovis, king of the Franks, very solemn and ever memorable, the holy bishop, St. Remigius, had the church adorned with rich carpets and beautiful plants and flowers. The sight was something new and unusual to the eye of the rough warrior, so that, on entering the church and beholding all this magnificence, he was filled with amazement, and exclaimed: “Father, is this the kingdom which thou hast promised me, if I believe in thy God and fulfil His will?” “No,” replied the saint, “this is only the porch, the entrance hall. If you are already so well pleased with the entrance hall, how great will be your joy,

when you shall one day enter in reality the heavenly kingdom and behold its ineffable glory!"

And so it is. How much will our hearts overflow with happiness if we are admitted to the kingdom of heaven! "Why do you wander about all countries in search of happiness for your soul," asks St. Anselm of Canterbury; "seek rather the kingdom of God, for there you will find what your heart craves for. Does beauty please you? In heaven the just are bright as the sun, and those who have led many into justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity. Do you seek health and a long life? In heaven you will find constant health and a life without end. Do you delight in music and sweet song? In heaven the angelic choirs sing without ceasing "Holy! holy! holy?" the virgins chant their new canticle, and wondrous melodies are played on golden harps! Do you yearn after honor and distinction? In heaven God will place His servants who on earth have been faithful in little things, over many and great things; He will ennoble them and make them co-

heirs with Jesus Christ. Finally, would you have certainty concerning the stability of your happiness? In heaven the elect receive from the hands of the Lord a precious crown of bliss which shall never be taken from them.”

It is in heaven only that undisturbed, endless happiness awaits us, and not on earth, as the unbelieving socialists would have us imagine. This earth will always be a valley of tears, for after the fall God said to Adam: “Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” (Gen. 3. 17, 19.) To gain heaven we must toil and struggle, labor and suffer.

In the year 1113 a young nobleman left his parents’ castle at Fontaines, near Dijon, with his four brothers in order to enter a convent in the solitude of Citeaux. This was Bernard, who afterwards became a great saint and Doctor of the Church. When the five young men were leaving home, their youngest brother, Nivard, a mere boy, was playing in the castle yard.

"Well, good bye," said Guido, the eldest, to him; "all our inheritance is now thine." But Nivard replied: "And so the earth is for me, and heaven for you! The division is certainly not a fair one." And Nivard joined them and also entered the monastery to live there for God alone.

It is not necessary for every one to leave the world and enter a convent, in order to be sure of gaining heaven. But it is certain that it does not suffice merely to say "Thy kingdom come," in order to reach heaven, but we must also live so that we may deserve heaven. Our divine Saviour Himself says: "Not every one that saith to Me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Mat. 7. 21.) "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Mat. 11. 12.) - And St. Paul says the same: "No man shall be crowned, except he strive lawfully." (2. Tim. 2. 5.) Therefore it behooves us to combat, to deny ourselves, to make strenuous efforts in order to con-

quer the kingdom of heaven. Let us never more lose sight of this truth; but let us be always dutiful children of the Church, for the Church is our true guide to heaven. The petition—“Thy kingdom come” is a prayer requesting God to grant that we and all men may belong to the Catholic Church, the kingdom of God on earth.

Out of the Catholic Church there is no salvation, is an undeniable truth. The celebrated Alban Stolz wished, therefore, to have the following inscription placed on his tombstone: “Whosoever has the happiness to be a faithful Catholic, is requested to recite here the “Our Father” and the “Angelus,” and at the same time, to remember my poor soul.” If we wish to go to heaven, we must be members of the Catholic Church, that is, we must belong to the body and soul of the Church, or, at least, we must have, as hidden members, a share in the Church’s life of grace. “Thy kingdom come” then means: “Help us, O God with Thy grace to be always faithful children of Thy holy Church, and bring back into her fold all who have lost the

true faith, as well as all who have never heard it preached." This reminds us of the Holy Land, where Jesus Christ was born and died for us. That land is now under the oppressive sway of the Turks. We are also reminded of Africa, where the Christian religion flourished, where there were numerous sees of bishops, where Sts. Cyprian and Augustine governed their flocks; but now that unhappy country groans under the bondage of Mahomedanism. We are reminded also of England, once called the Isle of Saints, but now split up and divided by numberless sects. We are reminded of Germany and Switzerland, where formerly the only one faith enlightened and guided all the people gathered around one altar to assist at the same divine Sacrifice, but where now thousands are living outside of the true faith. We are reminded of America, Asia and Australia, where so many are still seated in the darkness of error and infidelity. Let us pray to God for all of them: "Thy kingdom come." "Lead them, O Lord, to the light, bring them all back to their mother,

the Church, from whom they were violently torn away.”

It is, alas! so difficult to rid one's self of all the prejudices in which one has grown up, and to find one's way to the full truth, and then courageously to embrace it! If we read such works as “The trials of a mind” by Ives, Brownson's *Convert*, Newman's *Apologia*, Allies “*Per crucem ad lucem*,” and the many histories of conversions lately published, we shall be able to form some faint idea of the struggle, difficulties and persecutions converts have to go through to embrace the true faith. “The Lord knows,” says Professor Hugo Lämmer, a German convert, “how often I read the writings of Catholics with bitter tears and inward struggles. I wanted to set aside the evidence of their arguments, but every time I was forced to yield; and still I did not want to allow that Luther and his followers had been in the wrong. I was wanting in humility, but I was full of conceit. It was only through prayer that I succeeded in finally, in spite of my inward reluctance, perceiving and embracing the

truth." Louis Riedt, another convert, writes: "I fought bitterly and struggled passionately until I arrived at the complete conviction of the truth of the Catholic Church. Every thing in me opposed my becoming a Catholic. I was so determinedly prejudiced against everything Catholic, that were I to describe the feelings then actuating me, no one would deem it possible that I could ever have become a Catholic." And how many others who were convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church, and were sincere enough to acknowledge it by their words and their writings, like the celebrated philosopher Leibnitz, the eminent historian Frederic Böhmer, and the pious preacher Caspar Lavater, and yet could not muster up sufficient courage to make the sacrifices necessary to embrace that faith, to whose truth they bore testimony! And in our own days there are doubtless many outside of the Catholic Church, who, though convinced of the truth of her doctrines, are deterred by human respect, pride or other base motives, from taking the last and decisive step. Oh! let

us pray with all possible fervor, “Thy kingdom come!” “O God of mercy, vouchsafe to all heretics and unbelievers the grace to know and accept the truth, so that there may soon be but one fold and one shepherd!”

There are members of the Church who are dead members, because sanctifying grace does not dwell in them. Let us, then, also pray that the grace of God may reign supreme in their hearts. Do you know what he experiences, in whom the kingdom of grace has been made desolate and destroyed? The poet Brentano reveals it to us. “After I had lost the grace of God,” he says, “life seemed to me a cheerless, lonesome desert, where not a bush, nor a blade of grass, nor a refreshing well or spring can be found. I sank into an awful state of melancholy, misery and discontent.” “Whilst in this terrible state of mind he had an interview with Louise Hensel, who was then still a Protestant. This celebrated poetess, having received the confidence of his troubles, replied: “Why do you complain to me of your mental sufferings? Go

to a Catholic priest, and make a good confession." She was right. It is in the sacrament of penance that the sinner, estranged from God and abandoned by Him, finds again sanctifying grace, and with it the kingdom of God, the kingdom of love and peace, returns to his soul. Behold the drop of dew in the rays of the sun, how it shines, how it sparkles! A ray of the Sun of the divine Being falls, as it were, on the soul that is possessed of sanctifying grace, and the soul reflects the infinite beauty and Majesty of God, and not only the angels, but God Himself looks upon that soul with pleasure and love, and allows her to approach His heavenly banquet.

"Thy kingdom come!" How brief the petition, and yet how full of meaning! Grant, O God, that I may never lose sanctifying grace, or, if I ever be so unfortunate as to lose it, that I may recover it at once. Give to me the grace ever to remain a faithful member of Thy Church, and to heretics and unbelievers the grace to enter the one great sheepfold. Grant to us and to all men the grace to reach heaven. May

the heavenly kingdom come to us, — the kingdom of Thy Church and of Thy divine grace, the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!



CHAPTER V.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is
in heaven.”

DURING the last illness of Blessed Clement Hofbauer, the Redemptorist, a nun said to him: “We shall all pray that God may grant you many more years of life and health.” But the servant of God replied: “Not our will, but the will of God be done.” “But your death,” said the nun, “would be a great misfortune for us and for many persons.” “Sin,” remarked Blessed Clement, “is the only misfortune.”

“Thy will be done” is the third petition of the “Our Father.” How is the will of God made known to us? It is manifested to us in the ten commandments of God and the six precepts of the Church. “On earth as it is in heaven.” In heaven the angels perfectly fulfil the divine will. Whatever God bids them do, they do promptly, willingly and punctually. Thus also should

we do the will of God on earth. We should keep the commandments of God and of His Church promptly, that is, without delay or hesitation; willingly, that is, with a cheerful and willing heart; punctually, that is, exactly and in the minutest details. How beautiful and pleasant would it not be on earth, if everybody acted thus! This world would become a paradise.

But how many revolt against God's holy will by their disobedience! "*Non serviam,*" "I will not obey," they say as the rebellious angels did. "I do not like to submit, I will not obey."

A pious legend relates that there was a celebrated church in the island of Malta, to whose shrine multitudes of pilgrims used to resort from all parts of the world. But on a sudden it was rumored that a terrible dragon, dwelling in a cave near the road that led to the church, was wont to devour all who passed by. This put a stop to all the pilgrimages, and the church remained deserted. The Knights of Malta sallied forth to slay the dragon; but one knight after the other was torn to pieces

and devoured by the monster. The Grand Master of the Order then issued a decree forbidding the knights to go and combat against the dragon. The youngest knight, however, in his prowess, paid no attention to this prohibition. He boldly engaged in combat with the monster, and after a fierce struggle succeeded in killing him. His success caused everybody to rejoice. The knight was, therefore, conducted in triumph to his monastery, and the carcass of the monster was dragged along behind him. But his superior received him coldly, for he had forbidden all further combat with the dragon, and he valued obedience far more than bravery and success. He censured the young knight for his disobedience, and expelled him from the Order.

The people could not understand this. But the knight perceiving the serious fault he had committed by his disobedience, acknowledged the justice of his superior's action, and without seeking to vindicate himself, he left the monastery. Then the Grand Master called him back, and, embracing him said: "My son, your fault is

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 61

forgiven you, for you have gained a twofold victory, the one over the dragon, and the other over your own self. He who conquers himself is the greater hero."

But, alas! these self-conquering heroes have become very rare in our times! Disobedience reigns everywhere; disobedience to parents and superiors, to the ecclesiastical and to the civil authorities, obstinacy, resistance, insubordination and rebellion against the order laid down by God Himself. We have, then, many serious reasons to pray: "O God, Thy will be done! Grant us the grace always faithfully to accomplish Thy holy will. We will do all in our power to have those under our care to fulfil Thy holy will in all things."

In the year 1349 there raged the most terrible pestilence that ever was known; it was the famous "black death" mentioned in history. It ravaged the whole world, and laid many a land desolate. Ships were found at sea laden with treasures and merchandise, but all on board had died, and none had been left to steer the vessels. The physicians and the learned could not

account for the rise, progress and fatality of the disease, and could only say: "It is the will of God."

God makes known His will to us by His commandments, which we must keep, and also by the dispositions and permissions of His divine Providence, and it is our duty to accept them with resignation and submission.

. . . . Cease, cease, cease,
Ye troubles of my heart.
May God's sweet, charming will be done,
Forever on my part.

God orders and arranges every thing in this world. It is from His hands that we receive health and sickness, life and death, poverty and wealth, good and bad fortune. He sends us sunshine or rain, heat or cold, fine weather or violent storms. Without His will there falls not a sparrow from the roof, nor a hair from our head. Without His permission no one can do us harm. "Where the Infinite Wisdom exists," says Bossuet, "there is no room for chance." Therefore in every thing that happens to us, be it ever so bitter and unendurable,

be it ever so painful a trial, it behooves us to consider it as proceeding from the holy and adorable will of God, as a gift of His fatherly hand. It is our duty to submit every where and at all times to His infinitely wise and holy will. Let us say in all our trials and crosses: "Not as I will, but as Thou willest, O Lord."

Such was the prayer of holy Job. When he had lost all his possessions and all his children almost at a single blow, he fell down on his knees, saying: "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And when even his wife upbraided him for his humble resignation, he gave her this beautiful answer: "We have received good things from the hands of God, why should we not also receive evil?"

St. John Chrysostom, patriarch of Constantinople, prayed in the same strain. Having with truly apostolic zeal, denounced abuses and vices in his sermons, he incurred the enmity of many, and particularly that of the empress Eudoxia. By dint of intrigues she succeeded in having him ban-

ished. Before his departure for exile, he thus spoke to the people: "May the name of the Lord be praised throughout all eternity!" And when the courageous bishop was recalled from banishment, the first words he addressed to his flock were these: "May the name of the Lord be praised throughout all eternity! If any good has been done, praise God, and the good will endure. If any evil has happened, praise God, and the evil will pass away." And before dying, he again said: "May the name of the Lord be praised throughout all eternity!" these were his last words.

The great St. Martin, bishop of Tours, prayed in the same manner. When he was about to die, the clergy and the laity in attendance upon him, full of grief, asked him: "Why, O Father, will you leave us? Preying wolves will break in and devour the flock you have protected and guided." Then the octogenarian saint, folding his hands, prayed in this wise: "O Lord, if I am still necessary for Thy people, I will not refuse to bear the burden still longer. But Thy will be done!"

St. Elizabeth of Hungary prayed in a similar strain. The death of her noble husband was a great blow indeed to this young princess of twenty years. But it was only a little trial compared to what was to follow. With her three little children she was cruelly driven out of her castle of Wartburg by her wicked brother-in-law. She was cast out destitute and penniless. She wandered down the mountain and came to the village which had so often been the scene of her charities. There fresh insults awaited her. Strict orders had been issued forbidding hospitality to be given her, and these cruel orders were punctually obeyed by those who had so often been the recipients of her charity and liberality. At last she found in the depth of winter shelter in the wretched stable of an inn. Here she arranged as best she could a resting-place for herself and her little ones. At midnight she heard the bell of the Franciscan convent, which she herself had founded and endowed, ringing for Matins. The friars rise at midnight to chant the divine office, to praise God and

to pray for those who sleep. Elizabeth hastened to the church, assisted at the divine office, and when it was over, she requested the friars to sing the "*Te Deum*," "We praise Thee, O Lord," — the hymn sung by the Church on all occasions of thanksgiving, — *to thank God for all the trials He had now sent her and her little ones!*

Finally, the beggar, who was wished a "good day" by the celebrated preacher and writer Tauler, prayed in the same way. "I have never yet had a bad day," replied the beggar. "What do you mean," asked Tauler; "you are old and forsaken, ill-clad and poor." "Every day that I have lived," rejoined the beggar, "was sent to me by God. But God, being the infinite Good, cannot and will not send me any evil. I have therefore always had only good days, and not a single bad one."

"Thy will be done!" So let us always pray. Whether God grants us success or misfortune, honor or contempt, wealth or poverty, joy or sorrow, let us always say: "Thy will be done!" We shall then be able to sing with the poet:

Ne'er an hour passeth by,
But both rich and happy I,
For God's will — blessed be His name! —
And my will are e'er the same.

When His holy name I praise
One only prayer I pray always.
I nothing ask nor plead for then:
For all my prayer is but "Amen!"

But would you wish to know also what may happen, if one does not fulfil the will of God? Just before the beginning of the French revolution of 1789 a young man of good family presented himself to the superior of a convent of Capuchins, asking for admission into the Order. The superior after due examination finding in the young man signs of true religious vocation, gave him a letter to that effect to the superior of the novitiate. Full of joy, the young man went home to take leave of his family and relatives before proceeding to the novitiate. These, not relishing the idea of his entering religion, represented to him that the religious life was too austere for him. Yielding to their remonstrances he gave up the idea of becoming a religious, and went to Paris instead and there became a lawyer. What

became of him afterwards? History tells us all about him, for he was the man of blood, who played so prominent a part in the events which plunged France into an ocean of blood and tears. It was the notorious Robespierre. Left to himself, he sank deeper and deeper into the most abominable crimes. Had he obeyed the call of God and followed His holy will, he would, in all probability, have become one of the most saintly and happy men of France.

May the holy will of God be henceforth done by us and in us. The more we renounce our perverse and fickle will to follow the infinitely wise, holy, just and adorable will of God, the greater will be our progress in perfection and holiness. "This is the will of God," says St. Paul, "your sanctification." This will of God will take effect in us in proportion to our submission to the guidance of our heavenly Father.

One word God loves to hear
From you above all other ;
'Tis when heartily you pray :
"Thy will be done forever!"

CHAPTER VI.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

THERE was once a famine in Athens.

The Athenians sent messengers provided with empty flour sacks to Sparta to have them filled. The messengers explained the distress of Athens in a long and elaborate speech. But the laconic Spartans, caring but little for flowers of rhetoric and fine speeches, replied: “Your speech has been so long, that we have forgotten the import of your request; please tell us in as few words as possible what is it you want.” Then the Athenians held up and shook their flour sacks, to show how empty they were. This was enough for the Spartans. They filled the sacks with flour, and the messengers returned full of joy to Athens.

We need but few words to make known our wants to God. The single word “bread” is sufficient. “Give us this day our daily bread.” But as we have a two-fold life, the life of the body and the life of

the soul, that is, our physical, or natural life, and our supernatural life, we need two kinds of bread, the one for our body, and the other for our soul.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Each word of this petition is full of meaning. "*Give.*" Our daily bread and all that we need for our physical life is a gift of God. How easily we forget this! Because God does not cease to provide us day after day with the necessaries of life, we take it all for our due, and we do not even thank Him for it. In how many families grace is never said before and after meals! May it not happen some day that God will withdraw the bread and other necessaries from such people altogether? The rich man's possessions also are all the gift of God, and God may take them away from him all at once! How many times have I not seen in Paris respectably dressed people, who were formerly well off, receiving along with mendicants at some street corner some soup from a large kettle, and hastily devouring the victuals given them in charity! Now these persons, once in

affluence, are poor, and have nothing left but their fine clothes and kid gloves. Through the failure of some bank or some speculation, or through some other misfortune they lost all they possessed. How many, when so situated, commit suicide! Statistics show this to be of frequent occurrence.

And of what benefit are a rich man's possessions to him, if he suffers from an incurable malady, if he cannot eat, or cannot digest his food! At Baden-Baden many years ago a Russian prince died literally of starvation. He had millions at his disposal, but his gullet was so obstructed that he was unable to swallow anything. Thus in the midst of abundance he was starved to death.

“Give *us*.” We say not give “*me*” but “give *us*,” for true love requires that we be not selfish, but that we be mindful of our fellow-men, and pray for bread for them, nay, that we even share our bread with those who have none. “Give alms out of thy substance,” said Tobias to his son, “and turn not away thy face from any

poor person, for it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee." (Tobias 4, 7.)

One day Brentano, the poet, was taking a walk in Frankfort with the Protestant historian Böhmer. On the way a beggar asked him for an alms. Brentano, after looking intently at the face of the mendicant, gave him all the money he had with him, saying: "Is not your family from Heidelberg?" Without waiting for a reply, he passed on with tears in his eyes. When he had recovered his composure, he said to Böhmer: "Never refuse an alms to the poor." "But why did you ask that beggar whether he was from Heidelberg," inquired Böhmer. Brentano replied: "One day when I was in Heidelberg an old man, whose appearance was very similar to that of this beggar, asked me for an alms, and I refused him. Not long after I heard that he had been driven by distress to commit suicide."

Archduke Charles, who overcame Napoleon in several battles, relates the following fact: When one of the greatest generals

of last century was on his death-bed, his friends tried to cheer him up by recalling his many victories; but he replied: “O that I had only given a cup of water to a poor person!” Caroline Augusta, empress-dowager of Austria, used to deny herself many things considered necessary for a person in her station of life, in order to be able to bestow more abundant alms on the poor. She discharged the court-confectioner with these words: “I shall have a little more to give to my poor.” Once when she was unwell, the physician prescribed mineral waters. As soon as she felt a little better, she ceased using them, saying: “Since I do not need them any more, I shall have a little more to give to my poor.”

“Give us *this day*.” We ask only for to-day, and not for our whole life. Of course, economy is commendable and advisable, especially if we have a family depending upon us. But we should not be too anxious for the future, but, doing our best, we should trust in divine Providence. “Be not solicitous for the morrow,” says our divine Saviour. (Mat. 6. 34.) We do not

know whether we shall live until to-morrow. There was once a rich man whose broad acres brought forth a rich harvest. Seeing this, he said: "My granaries are full, and I have no more room where to bestow my fruits? And he said: This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and will build greater ones; . . . and I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." (Luke 12. 17-20.)

The words "this day" have also another meaning. We need our daily bread every day, and yet we pray for it only for to-day. By this our Lord gives us to understand that we should say the "Our Father" every day, even when our prayers are apparently not heard. Not many years ago a worthy man, having been unjustly slandered, lost his situation. He felt this most keenly, especially since his family were in great distress on account of it. But he did not grow despondent; he did not grumble and murmur against God, but continued to

pray with his wife and children. At the same time, he exerted himself to find another situation, and offered his services wherever he thought he might find work. But in vain. "We must pray still more," he said; "to-morrow we will commence a Novena." They did so with increased fervor. But now surely help was near. By no means; there seemed not to be the slightest prospect for him. Had he not been possessed of a firm trust in divine Providence and genuine piety, he would, like so many others similarly situated, have uttered sentiments of despair such as these: "It is now all over with me! If an honest man, a pious wife and four innocent children should remain for nine days on their knees praying to God for help in their distress, and all that to no purpose, either God does not care for the poor, or else there is no God." But such blasphemies never soiled his lips or his mind. On the contrary, he prayed still more fervently, saying: "We have not prayed enough yet; we must begin another Novena; let us commence it to-day." No sooner said,

than done. The next morning the letter-carrier, to his great surprise, brought him a registered letter containing money. The letter was from an old friend, whom he had helped many years before in his pecuniary embarrassment by lending him a considerable sum of money. He had long ago lost all hope of being repaid. But now he looked upon it as a special Providence of God, that he should have the money paid back to him just when he was in the greatest distress. Four days later the letter-carrier came again with another letter for him; the letter bore the government seal. A good government situation was offered him and was actually given him on the last day of his second Novena!

"Our." This word "our" shows us that each one must eat his own bread, and not that of others. One's own bread, honestly earned by one's own labor, makes one really happy. But those who eat the bread which they have not honestly earned, such as, swindlers, usurers, idlers, etc., shall experience the truth of this proverb: "The bread of lying is sweet to a man; but

afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.” (Prov. 20. 17.)

“*Daily.*” We are taught to pray not for riches or for abundance, because those who wish to become rich fall into temptation and into the snares of the devil and into many useless and hurtful desires, which bring upon men ruin and destruction.

“*Bread.*” This word includes all that is necessary for the maintenance of life, viz: food, clothing and shelter. It does not include delicacies, rare wines, silks and other costly things, nor grand mansions and expensive furniture; but only simple and wholesome food, good and appropriate clothing, and an humble, cheerful home. The word “bread” contains an admonition to the wealthy not to spend too much on dress and luxuries, but to give generously to the poor from their abundance.

The *bread of the soul* is of far greater importance than that of the body. This bread is the word of God. “He that is of God heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.” (John 8. 47.) “Blessed are they

who hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke 11. 28.) Do not these words contain a condemnation of those who seldom hear a sermon or an instruction, and who dislike to hear the word of God? However smart a man may be, however great his learning, he is really an ignoramus, if he is ignorant of the highest of sciences — the science of salvation.

One day St. Anthony of Padua, wishing to preach the word of God at Arino, found himself without a hearer. Grieved at the indifference of the inhabitants, he betook himself to the sea-shore in order to preach to the fishes. When he began preaching, an immense number of fishes of all kinds and sizes assembled in semi-circular rows before him, holding their heads above the water as if to see and listen to the preacher. The saint, filled with enthusiasm at the sight, delivered his famous sermon to the fishes, and among the crowd of people who had gathered around to witness the unusual and miraculous scene, many careless and hardened sinners were converted.

All the folk that saw the wonder
Wrought on fishes cold and dumb
Praised with them the Lord Creator,
That His grace so nigh did come.

Again, the bread of the soul is the grace of God, by means of which He strengthens us from day to day and enables us to do good. But, above all, the peculiar bread of the soul is the holy Sacrament of the altar. Bartolomeo Saluzzo was one winter's day leaning against a tree bereft of leaves and fruit. And, behold, all at once the tree began to bud forth and to produce leaves and blossoms, as is related by the bishop of the place, who was an eye-witness of the occurrence. The people surrounded the tree, cutting off the leaves and blossoms and taking them home as a remembrance of the wonderful event. But still more wonderful are the effects produced in the soul, when it leans on Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, in Holy Communion. "I am the living bread," says our divine Redeemer, "that came down from heaven. He that eateth of this bread shall live forever." It is in holy Communion that these words of our Lord have their fulfilment.

In it the soul receives an increase of sanctifying grace, its evil inclinations are weakened, its venial sins effaced, and it is filled with the grace and strength necessary to avoid mortal sin. Wonderful effects of holy Communion! How happy was not the aged Simeon, when it was granted to him to hold the Infant Jesus in his arms! How happy was not Zacheus, when the Saviour deigned to come to his house! But a thousand times happier are we, when Jesus Christ enters our hearts and fills us with His choicest blessings! Holy Communion is the bread which alone sustained for nearly twenty years both the spiritual and physical life of Blessed Nicholas von Flüe, and of Blessed Elizabeth von Reuthe for twelve years. It is that bread which daily sustains the priest amid the temptations and trials of this life; which imparts to the Sister of Charity the courage to sacrifice her life in hospitals, and even on the battle-field, in the service of the sick and the wounded; it is that bread which produces virgins and creates saints. How can we ever be sufficiently grateful to our

“Give us this day our daily bread.” 81

good God for this heavenly Bread! Let us receive it with a pure heart and sincere devotion, so that it may ever bring to us, not judgment, but salvation.

O this the wondrous heavenly Bread
That makes me bend in love and awe!
This Bread — It is my Lord and God;
This Bread — It is the Source of life;
This Bread — from heaven cometh down;
This Bread — the Manna on the way,
This Bread — the food of Paradise;
This Bread — the soul’s true Staff of life!

“Give us this day our daily bread.”
For how much and for what great things do we not pray in this petition! Our all depends on this corporal and spiritual bread never failing. Let us, therefore, say every day with all possible fervor: *“Give us this day our daily bread.”*



CHAPTER VII.

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

THERE was once a man who had not said the “Our Father” for years, for after making the sign of the cross, he would omit the Lord’s prayer and at once begin the “Hail Mary.” And why? Because whenever he tried to say the “Our Father,” and came to the fifth petition, he felt unable to continue; hence he would omit the “Our Father” altogether.

What is the fifth petition? “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

He who commits sin is a debtor to the divine justice, and such a debtor indeed, as to be unable by his own means and his own efforts to discharge this debt for all eternity. The trespass or debt of the sinner,—we speak here of the mortal sin,—is infinite, for he offends the infinite majesty

and sanctity of God. But an infinite debt demands a payment that is infinite, and man, who is a poor, weak, finite creature, can never make it. Thus for every mortal sin the eternal punishment of the sinner, from the part of the offended majesty of God, would inevitably result, unless God, in His boundless mercy, were graciously to remit the debt. When we say: “Forgive us our trespasses,” our only hope of forgiveness is based on the divine mercy, on God’s fatherly love towards us. Hence we should often say to Him: “Forgive us our trespasses.”

There is perhaps some person who imagines that all this is exaggeration. Let such a one recall all his thoughts, words and deeds, which are marked down in God’s book of reckoning, from the first day in which he had the use of reason up to this hour; let him recall and add together if he can, all the faults and sins which he has committed up to this moment. Is it not enough to make us tremble when we reflect on the sins of our youth, of our mature age, of our old age? Do we not feel

impelled then by sorrow and repentance to cry out to God for mercy: "Forgive us our trespasses?"

But this is not sufficient. To obtain the remission of our sins, we must also confess them, for so will our divine Saviour have it, since He instituted the sacrament of penance. But confession is difficult. Self-love prevents us from seeing our own sins, or causes us to look upon them as trifles. Often the human heart is so hard and cold as not to conceive sorrow for even the greatest sins. And often what struggles, what acts of self-denial are not required to confess sincerely to the priest our hidden transgressions! And all this cannot be done without the aid of divine grace. Let us then pray with earnestness and fervor: "Forgive us our trespasses! O God, grant us the grace to discover our sins, to repent of them from our inmost heart, and to confess them sincerely."

We say "forgive *us*," and not merely "forgive *me*," that is, "forgive all those who have offended Thee, all who have been careless in Thy service; all who, perhaps,

no longer think of Thee; all who, out of hatred, seek to destroy by word and writings Thy kingdom on earth. Forgive us and all trespassers, and enable us all again to walk in the road to heaven.” Such is the prayer of true Christian charity, which embraces all men.

Some distance above the city of Naples is situated Camaldoli, perhaps the most beautiful and picturesque spot in Europe. There the eye enjoys a most enchanting view. Three bays are spread out before one’s gaze; the bay of Naples, with its magnificent wreath of cities, the gulf of Baiae, nestling in the land, in which is situated the graceful islet of Nisida, looking like a jewel on blue velvet, and the gulf of Gaëta, gleaming in the dazzling rays of the sun; behind these the immense sea stretches out, as the “image of infinity,” whilst in the distance looms up in gloomy majesty Mount Vesuvius, and above all is the Southern sky in all its smiling brilliancy. Such is Camaldoli on a bright summer day.

Yet Camaldoli itself is still more beauti-

ful. There stands the monastery of St. Romuald, and devout monks pass through its hallowed cloisters, praying and chanting and leading a life of austerity and penance. These holy monks do penance for the sins of the world which lies at their feet. "There is hardly anything more captivating than the nightly office in choir on the summit of Camaldoli," says Paul Stiegele in his *Monastic Sketches*. "Above are the heavens, below is the sea covered with vessels; at their feet lies the capital, and to the left rises Vesuvius, a gigantic censer, burning to the honor of God, and emitting smoke and fire into the night. What a surrounding for the nightly matins! What music of nature to accompany the psalms of David!"

"Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" "When you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you yours sins. But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father, that is in heaven, forgive you your sins." (Mark 11. 25, 26.)

“For if you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences.” (Mat. 6. 14.) From this it is evident that the fifth petition of the “Our Father” will be granted to us, only under the condition that we first forgive our neighbor from our heart. God will certainly not forgive us so long as we bear in our hearts malice and hatred against our fellow-men. We must be able to say what the noble president of Ecuador, Garcia Moreno, said, when he was dying on the 6th of August, 1875, bleeding from twenty-two wounds. When he was asked, before breathing his last, whether he would forgive his murderer, he replied: “I have already forgiven him.” We should be able to speak in the same spirit as did Louis XVI. of France, who was executed January 21st, 1793. “Frenchmen, I die innocent. I forgive the authors of my death. May my blood not fall back on France.” These were his last words.

But some will say: “I cannot forgive.” This is simply not true. Thousands were able to do it and actually did it, who were

far more deeply injured than you. God does not command the impossible: and He commands you to forgive under pain of exclusion from heaven. "But," say you, "he has too grievously wronged me." Has he spit into your face? Has he scourged you, or crowned you with thorns, or nailed you to a cross? All this Jesus Christ endured, and He forgave His murderers. Are you greater than He? Is an offence against you more grievous than one committed against our divine Saviour? Have you not again and again provoked God to anger by heinous sins, and has He not again and again forgiven you? How can you then refuse to extend to your offender the hand of reconciliation? "But," you say, "the offender must first come and apologize." Your enemy will require the same of you. But our loving Redeemer says that he who does not forgive his neighbor from his heart, will not be forgiven. And what would become of you, if God refused to forgive you? You would be lost forever. "I will forgive my enemy," you say, "but I will have nothing more to do with him." Is this a

sincere reconciliation, a forgiveness from your heart? Would you be satisfied, if God were to speak thus to you, saying: “I forgive you, but in future I will have nothing more to do with you, and will not care anymore for you. I will forgive you, but will no longer love you as my friend.” You are not obliged to show your enemy, or offender, any special signs of friendship and love, nor are you required never more to think of the wrong he has done you, for that is often impossible. But you should be kind and civil to him, salute him, be ready to help him if he is in need, and you should not exclude him from your prayers. That is sufficient. Who is not able to do this much?

Long ago there lived in a town in Spain a poor widow with an only son. One evening one of her neighbors rushed into her house very much excited, exclaiming: “Tia Manuela, some young people have quarreled and fought, and one of them has been killed; and that one is — your son.” These words fell like a thunderbolt into the heart of the poor mother. As if mad she

rushed out to see her dead son. But a young man suddenly stopped her; his face was pale, he looked agitated, and his clothes were stained with blood. Holding her back, he stammered out: "Tia Manuela, they are pursuing me, they are looking for me! I have done it, but for Christ's sake forgive me, save me, hide me in your house, where nobody will ever think of seeking me." What a request for the poor unfortunate mother! And what did she do? Without saying a word, she led the murderer into the room, making a sign to him to hide himself under the bed. Hardly had she done so, when the door was opened, and the corpse of her dear son was brought to her and laid on the very bed beneath which the murderer was hidden. This was too much for the poor mother. Overpowered with grief she threw herself upon her son's body and burst into a flood of tears. After her first outburst of grief, a magistrate entered with the intention of searching the house, saying: "People say that the murderer has taken refuge in your house. Is it true?" The

deeply afflicted woman, calling to mind the murderer's entreaty to her, replied: “How could you imagine such a thing?” The magistrate rejoined: “I myself thought that such a thing could never be.” He then left the house. The following night the woman gave her son's murderer some of her son's clothes, and let him go, saying: “May God forgive thee as I have forgiven thee! Go, and do penance for thy sins.”

John Gualbert, a Florentine nobleman and a soldier of renowned bravery, had an only brother, named Hugo. Hugo having been murdered by a relative, John swore a bloody revenge. One day, — it was Good Friday, — John unexpectedly met the murderer. John was fully armed, but the murderer was unarmed, and the place of meeting was such that he could not escape. Then the murderer fell on his knees, and stretching out his arms in the form of a cross, besought him saying: “For the love of Jesus Christ who died to-day on the cross forgiving his murderers, forgive me also!” And John, replacing his sword in its scabbard, held out his hand to the

murderer, saying: "For the love of Jesus Crucified I forgive thee." He, moreover, took him in the place of his brother, and going to the nearest church, he hung up his armor and his arms beside the altar, retired to a monastery and became a great saint.

Not so Sapricius, who lived in the early times of the Church, and who had a friend by the name of Nicephorus. A violent dispute one day ended their friendship. From that time they were as perfect strangers to each other, neither visiting, nor even saluting one another. But as Nicephorus was one evening reciting the "Our Father," and when he had come to the fifth petition, it suddenly dawned upon him, that he should first forgive his friend before he could obtain forgiveness from God. The next day, hard though it was, he went to Sapricius to ask his pardon. But in vain; Sapricius refused. Now Sapricius was a priest. Nicephorus, therefore, waited till he would go to say Mass; he then fell on his knees before him, beseeching him to forgive him for the love of Jesus Christ, who offers Himself on the

altar a victim for all men. But Sapricius remained obstinate.

Shortly after this a persecution of Christians broke out. Sapricius was one of the first accused of being a Christian, and was thrown into prison and condemned to death. The day of execution arrived. Nicephorus waited to meet him on the road to the scaffold, and on the approach of Sapricius, forcing his way through the crowd, and kissing the chains of Sapricius, he besought him to forgive him before he should die. But Sapricius again refused, and would not listen to his request for a reconciliation. Finally, when the executioner was about to raise his sword to behead Sapricius, Nicephorus pleaded earnestly once more for pardon, and, behold what happened! Instead of saying “I forgive thee,” Sapricius exclaimed: “I am no Christian; I will sacrifice to the gods,” and thus became an apostate, for he was unworthy of a martyr’s crown. Then Nicephorus stepped forward, crying out: “I am a Christian; it is treason against Christ to sacrifice to the gods; put me to death, for I am a

Christian." And Nicephorus died a martyr's death! Thus does divine grace forsake him who will not forgive. Let us, therefore, forgive; it is only under this condition that God will forgive us. It is only then that we can sincerely say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Often I grieve at the thought of my sins,
And their guilt which does daily increase.
Yet Thou, who art hurt by my wilful excess,
Still loaded me down with Thy grace.

Oh! take my poor heart in Thy loving embrace,
And soften its hardness of stone.
And may I sweet mercy and pardon obtain,
As I pardon my neighbor his wrong.



CHAPTER VIII.

“And lead us not into temptation.”

IN the Rhine valley, between the episcopal see of Chur and Lake Constance, is situated the village of Gams in Switzerland, whose inhabitants are all Catholic, whilst those of all the surrounding villages are Protestant. How did this village remain faithful to the Church? It happened in this way. At the time of the so-called Reformation, the inhabitants of a neighboring village, who had apostatized, sent a friendly invitation to the people of Gams to come to them and give up the ancient faith. It was on the feast of the Ascension that the people of Gams started in procession, going through fields and woods, to the neighboring village, where they proposed to do as they had been requested. When the villagers had arrived at a spot where lay the stump of a fallen tree, an old man mounted the stump, and bid them halt. Then he addressed them as follows:

"My dear neighbors, listen to me. You are engaging yourselves in a very serious undertaking; you are about to give up that faith in which our forefathers have lived happily and died with confidence. Have you seriously deliberated about this with our good God? Have you prayed for light?" The villagers were quite confounded at these words, and acknowledged that they had not prayed. "Well, then," continued the speaker, "let us pray now." All knelt down and began to recite the "Our Father." And having recited it several times, they overcame the temptation, turned back and remained Catholic. In like manner we, too, can overcome all temptations.

Whence do temptations come? Certainly not from God, for being holiness and justice itself, He cannot entice anybody to sin. Temptations come either from our evil passions, or from the world, or from the devil.

St. Peter thus speaks of the devil: "The adversary goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He is constantly watching a favorable op-

portunity to ensnare us. He gives us no rest, either by day or by night, either in solitude or in society, in health or in sickness. He is not restrained by dignity of person, nor by the greatness of one's virtue. He is not deterred by failure or defeat. If overcome ninety-nine times, he will try the hundredth time to make us fall. When he finds his own efforts futile, he relies mainly on the support of his faithful allies, of those, who have already given themselves to him.

The wicked man, to quiet his remorse, seeks to lead his companions into the same sins that he himself is guilty of, for the good life of others is a constant and unbearable reproach to him. The seducer craftily sets his snares to entice the good, the innocent, the simple-minded into his evil ways. He seeks their company, engages them in conversation, at first about indifferent things, then gradually leads it to other topics, and, feeling his way, he at last, by apparent frankness and deceitful maxims, succeeds in effecting their ruin. The ridicule of piety and pious people is

usually a powerful weapon in the hands of the godless, who thereby often lead the good and well-meaning to give up the practice of prayer and the reception of the sacraments. Does not a sad daily experience tell us this? Boys and girls, young men and young women, who but yesterday were still innocent and pure, are to-day defiled by sin and rush headlong in the road of vice! How numerous and potent are the charms of seduction! How many, now in eternal torments, curse and will forever curse their seducers!

But there are other dangers to salvation still greater than these, dangers from within. Since the fall of our first parents the human heart has become the abode of numerous evil inclinations and passions, which wage a fierce war within us. Who does not feel this constant struggle in his interior between the two men, the good and the bad, as the ancients expressed it? Who does not feel the emotions of anger, sensuality, pride and avarice?

It often happens that we do not even recognize our passions, or that we endeavor

to give them the appearance of virtue. We call slavish fear prudence, and under the veil of economy and thrift avarice creeps into and degrades our soul. Pride conceals itself in the shadow of personal dignity; anger is designated as a holy indignation; sloth shelters itself under the pretext of a need of rest; envy, that insatiable vulture, slandering the good and poisoning with its foul breath the purest virtue, caps the climax by prating about justice, impartiality, charity and love of truth. Thus do men try to deceive themselves.

The temptations in our way are so numerous, that we have every reason to pray: “Lead us not into temptation,” that is, “preserve us from temptations, or help us to overcome them successfully.”

The heart of man must, indeed, be something great, for God, the devil, the world and the flesh seek its possession. Therefore, whilst you can, chose the best Guest, and when you have chosen Him, cling to the Lord whom you possess.

But why does God allow us to be tempted? For many wise reasons. He wishes to put

our humility to the test. Pride creeps only too easily into our heart. If we walk but a few steps in the path of virtue, we are self-pleased, and we imagine ourselves to be already as holy as a saint. We rely on our own strength, imagining ourselves so secure that no danger can harm us. This is a dangerous state, for says the Holy Ghost, "pride goeth before a fall" (Prov.) and "God resisteth the proud," says St. James (4. 10.). It is therefore good for us to be subject to temptations, for they make us aware of our misery, of our helplessness, prick the bubbles of our self-conceit, and show us that we can do nothing without the help of divine grace.

God allows us to be tempted in order to test our fidelity. It is when we are in need that we find out our true friends; the brave soldier is found out on the field of battle. It is in temptation that we discover whether we love God, not in word merely, but in deed. Our fidelity has then to stand its ordeal of fire. We can then see whether our piety and virtue are mere shams, mere mechanical habits, natural inclinations, or

else genuine, pure gold. “It is in a storm,” says St. Basil the Great, “that the skill of the helmsman is proved, and in battle that the bravery of the soldier is shown, and in temptation that the fidelity of the Christian is manifested.”

It is in the darkest midnight
That the starry vault 's best seen ;
And in black and sombre cloudlets
The rainbow paints her scenes.

Temptations serve to increase our merit. “Our earthly pilgrimage,” says St. Augustine, “cannot be without temptations ; no man can be crowned, unless he has been victorious ; no one can be victorious, unless he has fought ; no one can fight, unless he has an enemy to oppose him.” It is, therefore, befitting that God should permit temptations to assail us. Every temptation successfully overcome is a victory over the enemies of our salvation, and every victory will shine as a precious gem in the crown of glory which God has in store for us in heaven. Therefore “blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of

life." (James 1. 12.) "The greatest of temptations," says the Curé d' Ars, "is when a man has none. We may say that every one is happy, if he has temptations to contend with. Temptation is the time of the spiritual harvest, wherein fruit is gathered for heaven. In the time of the harvest a man rises early and works hard, but makes no complaints, because it is harvest-time."

Although we should gladly combat temptations, we should, nevertheless, never carelessly or deliberately put ourselves in the way of temptation. But how often do we not do so!

Many associate with loose companions, and are led by them into many sins! In such company they expose their faith and their virtue to almost certain destruction. Some begin company-keeping too early in life without due safe-guards, without serious or upright intentions, without a view to an early and lawful marriage. Such company-keeping is sinful and leading to a multitude of sins. Some are wont to read books, periodicals and papers either hostile to our holy religion, or of an im-

moral tendency, and are thus inevitably led to the loss of both faith and virtue. And yet these persons in their prayers say: “Lead us not into temptation!” Is not this making a mockery of God, since they unnecessarily and recklessly expose themselves of their own free will to great temptations? It is no wonder if they fall deeply into sin, for, says the Holy Ghost, “he that loveth danger, shall perish therein.” (Eccli. 3. 27.)

It behooves us diligently to make use of the means necessary to overcome temptations. The first means is the flight of the occasions of sin, for, as we have seen, we must keep out of the danger of sinning as much as lies in our power. In the next place, we must resist the temptation as soon as it makes its appearance. He who dilly-dallies with it, plays with the devil, as it were, and is usually already lost. Resist at once, banish evil thoughts at once, and direct your thoughts to other subjects. And as we ourselves are weak and helpless, we must invoke God’s help at once, saying: “Lord, save me, lest I perish! Jesus, help me! Mary, pray for

me!" Let us never fail to invoke in temptation the powerful names of Jesus and Mary, and we shall conquer it, for in these holy names there is a wonderful power against evil; they are a terror to the demons. The sign of the cross is also a powerful preservative against assaults of hell. Other means of conquering temptations may be found in calling to mind the presence of God, and in serious reflection on the Four Last Things. Let us, when assailed by temptation, make use of these means, and we shall always come forth victorious from the combat, for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with the temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10. 13.)

Why art thou sad, my troubled soul,
When Satan threatens thee?
God's faithful; only persevere:
And he must flee from thee.

A crown all set in light divine
Is for the soldier true.
So persevere, be not afraid,
And God will thee rescue.

CHAPTER IX.

“Deliver us from evil.”

IN Japan the punishment of the sack is inflicted on great criminals. And as the Japanese considered the Christians, as such, to be great criminals, this mode of punishment was applied to them. They were enclosed up to their necks in a sack, and had to stand up in them in the open air, night and day, without food or drink, until they succumbed to their sufferings.

It may be said of us also, that we are standing in a sack, for we are helpless and surrounded on all sides by manifold evils. The evils of life are so numerous! Think only of the almost endless variety of diseases, of the epidemics, storms, cyclones, floods, wars, conflagrations, scarcity and famine which desolate the world. We find evils everywhere, for everywhere we meet with poverty, misery, sufferings, quarrels, grief and tears. Evils are the lot not only of the poor, but also of the rich. Behind

the costly curtains of wealthy mansions there is often found heart-rending sorrow and unhappiness. "More tears fall on the silken garments of a queen than on the apron of a farmer's wife." Such were the words addressed by the queen of Italy to Cardinal Mermillod, who had accidentally met her in the royal palace with her eyes bathed in tears. Evils are of daily occurrence, for every day has its own troubles. "Sometimes hath the brightest day a cloud," says Shakespeare. O God, deliver us from evil! Save us from disease, poverty, failure of crops, famine, hunger and want, from the fury of the elements, from epidemics and from war.

These things, however, are not always to be considered as evils, but are often a great benefit. The wickedness of king Manasses had scandalized all Jerusalem. God punished him. He was taken in chains to Babylon and cast into a dungeon. In his misfortune, he began to reflect seriously on his misdeeds, acknowledged them, and bewailing them, obtained the divine forgiveness. Like Manasses, the prodigal

son, so long as he had the means of gratifying his passions, revelled in luxury and vice; but when his wealth had melted away like snow in the spring sun, when he began to feel the pangs of hunger, he began also to reflect and weep over his sinful life, and returned repentant to his father's house. The penitent thief on the cross was also like the prodigal son. As long as he remained with his evil associates, he was not aware of the extent of his wickedness. But when he had been nailed to the cross, he reflected on his past life, and besought our Lord to grant him mercy. Saul, afterwards called Paul, had the same experience as the penitent thief. Like a ravenous wolf in a flock, so did he persecute the Christians. But when Jesus Christ cast him to the ground and deprived him of his sight, he was entirely changed, and cried out: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9. 6.)

What the pages of Holy Writ record about the utility of physical evil, is corroborated by a daily experience. Some who commit more sins than Manasses, who are

more dissolute than the prodigal son, more wicked than the "good" thief, and more violent against God's Church than Saul, at first heed neither admonitions nor warnings. Then the heavenly Father sends them misfortunes and sufferings, deprives them of the health they abused, of the wealth, the source of their crimes, of perhaps an only child, who later on might have gone astray, or of their good name, which nourished their excessive pride. And now see the result. They are aroused from their lethargy, they are terrified at the sight of their heinous crimes, they cast themselves at the feet of the representative of God, confess their guilt and change their life. Thus do sufferings and trials arouse thousands from their evil ways and lead them from a life of sin to a life of virtue.

Sufferings are useful for the good and pious also, provided they are borne with patience and resignation, for "per crucem ad lucem," "it is by the cross that we come to the light." The saints followed no other road than that of the cross to attain perfection.

“Deliver us from evil” means: “Preserve us from physical evil in as far as it may prove hurtful to our soul; but protect us especially from sin and eternal damnation, for these are the only real evils. Even venial sin is a great evil, for it is an offence against God; it deprives us of many graces which God would grant us; draws down on us various punishments, and gradually leads to mortal sin. How diminutive are the grains of sand, and yet in a large heap they are capable of sinking a ship! How small are the drops of rain, and yet they can cause swollen streams to overflow their banks and carry away large buildings. So it is with little sins; they gradually lead to greater transgressions, and, at last, to mortal sin, the greatest and most terrible of evils.

Mortal sin is a serious offence against God, a grievous disobedience of our sovereign Lord and supreme Master. Who is God? He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Millions serve Him, and tens of millions stand before Him. And what is man? A weak, helpless creature, wholly

dependent on God. And this insignificant creature dares to revolt against his Creator, to refuse to submit to Him, saying with barefaced arrogance: "I am my own master, I will do as I like." Does not such a rebellious spirit very grievously offend God?

Mortal sin is also a shameful ingratitude towards God, the best of fathers. God is a Father, nay, the very best Father. He loves us and cares for us so tenderly, He bestows numberless benefits on us; in a word, His love for us is beyond all conception. Should we not be most grateful to Him for it? And yet, he who commits mortal sin, acts as if he did not know God or care for Him, he despises and insults Him. What a mean, shocking ingratitude! The sinner even avails himself of God's benefits to offend Him. God gave him his eyes, and he abuses them by his impudent and impure looks; God gave him a tongue, and he abuses it by cursing, vile oaths, scoffing at religion, obscene conversation, backbiting, slander, etc. God gives him his daily food and drink, and he abuses

these gifts by his intemperance ; God gave him an intellect, and he abuses it by indulging in impure, or revengeful thoughts. God gave him a free-will, and he abuses it by refusing to submit to God’s commands. “Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me.” (Is. 2. 2.) Thus does God complain of those who commit mortal sin.

Mortal sin is an unpardonable faithlessness towards Jesus Christ, our most loving Redeemer, who “hath washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Apoc. 1. 5.) Our divine Saviour did not think He could do too much for us. He suffered the most cruel torments, and died the most shameful of deaths on the cross to redeem us. Should we not on this account be ever faithful to Him and never forsake Him? And yet what does he do who commits mortal sin? He casts off Jesus Christ, his most faithful friend, and enters into a league with Satan, who can then boastfully say to the Saviour: “Behold this soul, for

whose sake Thou didst consent to be scourged, to be crowned with thorns, to die on the cross, and yet it has abandoned Thee and given itself to me!" Is not this a shameless perfidy? A perfidy like to that of Judas, who, from a chosen apostle, became the betrayer of Jesus Christ; a perfidy like to that of the Jews who cried out: "Away with Him! Release Barabbas unto us!" (Luke 23. 18.)

Mortal sin deprives the sinner of sanctifying grace, and, together with it, of the love and friendship of God and of all supernatural merits. So long as a man is in the state of sanctifying grace, his soul is united with God and receives from Him a wonderful mysterious life, and the Holy Ghost dwells within him. Mortal sin, however, expels the Holy Ghost from his soul, deprives it of its supernatural life, extinguishes the light of grace in it, fills it with darkness and renders it spiritually dead.

As long as a man possesses sanctifying grace, his soul shines as with a wonderful brightness. Mortal sin robs it of this beauty and renders it hideous. As long as

a man is in the state of sanctifying grace, he is a friend of God and is beloved by Him. Mortal sin deprives him of this friendship, and makes him the enemy of God.

When the soul loses sanctifying grace through mortal sin, it loses all its merits also. For every good work performed in the state of grace we may expect a reward in heaven. But through mortal sin the reward thus gained is all lost. However numerous the treasures he may have previously accumulated in heaven, mortal sin deprives the sinner of them all in a moment. But this is not yet all. So long as he remains in sin, he cannot gain any merit for heaven; his good works may otherwise be very useful, yet they have no value for heaven. If he regains the grace of God, however, all the merits previously acquired will revive.

Mortal sin, finally, brings down the judgment of God and leads to eternal damnation. God punishes the sinner. A bad conscience is often its own punishment. “There is no peace for the wicked.” Such was the punishment of Cain, who wandered

about the earth after his crime, unable to find peace or rest. Judas was so tormented by remorse that he in despair committed suicide. God sends other punishments also, such as misfortunes, diseases, disgrace sudden death! "Behold I will bring evils upon this people, because they have not heard My words, and have cast away My law." (Is. 6. 19.)

Punishment does not always follow mortal sin immediately. This, however, should not lull the sinner into a false security. "Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? For the Most High is a patient rewarder." (Eccli. 5. 4.) He often waits a long time, watching to see whether the sinner will repent; but if the sinner persists in his sin, His justice will at last step in.

But the most terrible of all punishments is eternal damnation. St. Paul, speaking of the joys of heaven, says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. 2. 9.) As great as is the happiness

of heaven, so terrible is the punishment of the reprobate, and we may, therefore, also say with St. John Chrysostom: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what punishments God hath prepared for them that offend Him.” No eye has seen it! And yet what terrible things has not the eye of man already seen! Noah and his family saw the flood, the destruction of men and beasts. But this is not what God has prepared for those whose sins lead them to hell, for that no eye has seen.—No ear has heard it! What horrible sounds has not the human ear already heard! Lot and his daughters heard the crackling of the burning sulphur as it fell upon Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the dreadful cries of their sinful inhabitants as they perished in the fire. But this is not what God has prepared for those who are lost, for no ear has heard it. — It has not entered the heart of man. What grief, what anguish, what torture has already preyed on the human heart! What pain to their mothers’ hearts was not the slaughter of so many innocent babes by Herod!

What agony and despair must have prevailed at the destruction of Jerusalem, at the destruction of Lisbon! But this is not what God has prepared for those who perish eternally, for no human heart has conceived it. Can there be, then, anything more terrible than eternal damnation? *Eternal!* "Even hell's most excruciating torments," says St. Augustine, "would be bearable, if the word *eternal* could be eliminated from them. It is the eternity of reprobation, the eternity of hell that plunges the damned into despair!" "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Such is the irrevocable sentence of the reprobate. Let us, therefore, daily pray from our inmost heart: "Deliver us from evil! Preserve us, O Lord, from sin and from eternal damnation!"

"Amen," we add; that is, "so be it." This word indicates how we anxiously long and hope to be heard by God.

* * *

Not long ago, a lady whose mind was tainted with so-called "liberal" ideas, or

notions, called upon a lady friend, who had been a long and great sufferer, and who found her only consolation in her pains in the frequent recitation of the “Our Father.” Just as her visitor entered her apartments she was reciting this most excellent of prayers. “Praying again, Mary,” said the visitor; “and yet what good does praying do you?” “Gertrude,” replied the sick woman, “I beg you, do not speak in that way, for God might punish you.” The free-thinking lady was, indeed, in very good circumstances. Her husband had a fine position; they lived happily together, and tenderly loved their only child. But what happened? About a week after the conversation just related, she was the most unhappy woman in the world. Her husband, laboring under the illusion that he was some great personage, had to be taken to the insane asylum, and she found herself destitute, for she had been too fond of dress and pleasure to save. Now, she once more began to pray, and soon, like Mary, her friend, found her greatest consolation in the frequent recitation of the “Our Father.”

"Our Father!" Let this be our favorite daily prayer. Wonderfully deep is its meaning, wonderfully rich are its blessings! Its every word is a precious pearl. "It is one of the most beautiful testimonies to the divinity of its Author, it is the best mainstay of a sorrowing soul," says Sealsfield. There can be no prayer more beautiful or more excellent than that taught by our Lord Himself. There is, moreover, no other way to heaven, than the way of prayer. "All the saints have become saints by prayer;" says St. Alphonsus de Liguori; "all the reprobate are lost, because they did not pray; had they prayed, they would not have been lost."



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